

Company Engagement Strategy

Empower staff by building intrinsic motivation.

Recognize is founded on modern principles of positive psychology. The result is a program centered on intrinsic motivation, reenforced behavior, and workflow integration. While other strategies surround around gifting of physical goods, the research shows this is a losing strategy.¹ Systematic gifting through a recognition program will result in decreased motivation for information workers. Any increase in motivation is largely due to the status, access, or power the gifting brings. Meanwhile, companies could be spending that gifting money in more fruitful ways - on salaries or on experiences. To help companies thrive, the following is a philosophy around recognition and company culture from a perspective of psychology research.

1 http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation

“Don’t give me gifts
I don’t need, just pay
me what I’m worth.”

- Anonymous knowledge worker

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1. Pay Staff What They Deserve

If companies pay their staff adequately and fairly, the monetary component of an engagement strategy is covered. Low salaries may lower expenses, but at what cost to productivity and profits? If staff is paid less than sufficient, recognition and reward programs will have trouble gaining respect when more basic components are unmet.

The solution is to pay industry average at a minimum. If a company pays staff above industry average, they will feel pride for the company and will promote the company brand. In fact, 60% of employees reported pay is in the top five of contributors to their job satisfaction.¹

“Amazon pays its staff higher than any other technology company in Seattle.” An Amazon.com employee proudly proclaimed to me in 2007. She also pointed out that Amazon saved money by converting old doors into desks. She felt pride because Amazon found creative ways to cut costs, while paying staff what they deserve.

If your staff is paid fairly, employee’s concern over self-worth will be replaced with focusing on being creative and increasing revenue. Imagine the collective mind shift of a company where everyone feels respected. Some companies may try bonuses, but even that can be demotivating or uneffective.² An employee recently said to me, “I was rewarded a bonus, but was told not to tell anyone. The cash was nice, but I am already paid well.” If that employee was given public praise he would have responded better than a secretive cash bonus.

1 http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Documents/12-0537%202012_jobsatisfaction_fnl_online.pdf

2 <http://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/the-true-secret-of-employee-motivation.html>

2. Public Praise

Social employee recognition is a fun and an easy way to motivate staff. Recognition when tied to company values can align and focus the staff on a common goal. Monthly gatherings that present recognitions will reenforce the company's goals and its values. Further, when accomplishments are shared publicly, the highlighted staff gain a sense of status.

Tie recognition to experiences and events

People want status, access, power and stuff, in that order.¹ Most employees report the chance to build skills is in their top five biggest motivators at work.² Companies can use recognition data to determine contextual rewards of status, access, and power. For instance, if an employee is recognized for thinking creatively, they can be given status as a creative expert in the company, given access to a conference, and given power in decision making in a creative group inside the company. With only the cost of the conference, an employee can be highly motivated to help the company, while gaining new skills at the same time.

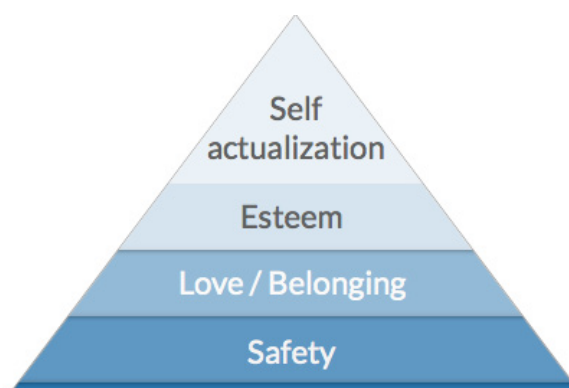
Ask staff to recognize others great work on a monthly basis. By positively reenforcing ideal behaviors, staff ROI will increase. Recognize supports a metric to show recognition engagement, called the Recognition Engagement Score (RES).³ A 100% score means everyone in your company was recognized in the past month. This helps companies know which groups of individuals, or whether the company as a whole, is engaged in recognition. In fact, watching the RES go up when sending a recognition is what we call "collective gamification", or helping your whole company move forward together.

Start slow and keep it top of mind

The most successful companies using Recognize are ones who previously had a recognition program. They often used excel and email as their primary tool. Companies should test the waters through low-tech solutions, such as email for recognition, before diving into a bigger platform. Try asking some of your most engaged staff members to try a recognition program first and see their reaction. From there, grow the program to include other groups and eventually the whole company.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

If money through salary, bonus, or reward are the only ways you engage in staff, then you leave your staff in the safety level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If you create other kind of rewards based in status, access, and power, you can tap into staff's love/beloining and esteem categories. Giving more money is redundant if already paying staff what they deserve.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
Don't leave your staff at Safety.

1 <http://it-ebooks.info/book/570/>

2 http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Documents/12-0537%202012_jobsatisfaction_fnl_online.pdf

3 http://www.enterprise-gamification.com/mediawiki/index.php?title=Recognition_Engagement_Score

3. Give Experiences

If you want to live a happy life, then spend your money on experiences. They fill our lives with joy because it connects us to other people, and gives us lifelong memories. Experiences don't have to cost a lot of money.¹ Instead, focus on what people care about. Many experiences can benefit the company. These experiences show the employee they are valued.² You can create individual experiences for staff who accomplish greatness in the company as well. The following are a set of examples surrounding the idea of status, access, and power.

1 <http://www.inc.com/guides/201105/7-ways-to-improve-employee-satisfaction.html>
2 <http://www.sparkminute.com/2011/08/30/tips-to-boost-employee-morale/>

Status suggestions:

- + Special job titles or roles
- + Employee of the month
- + Flat screen in break room showing top employees of last month

Access suggestions:

- + Parking spot
- + Conferences
- + Events
- + Day off

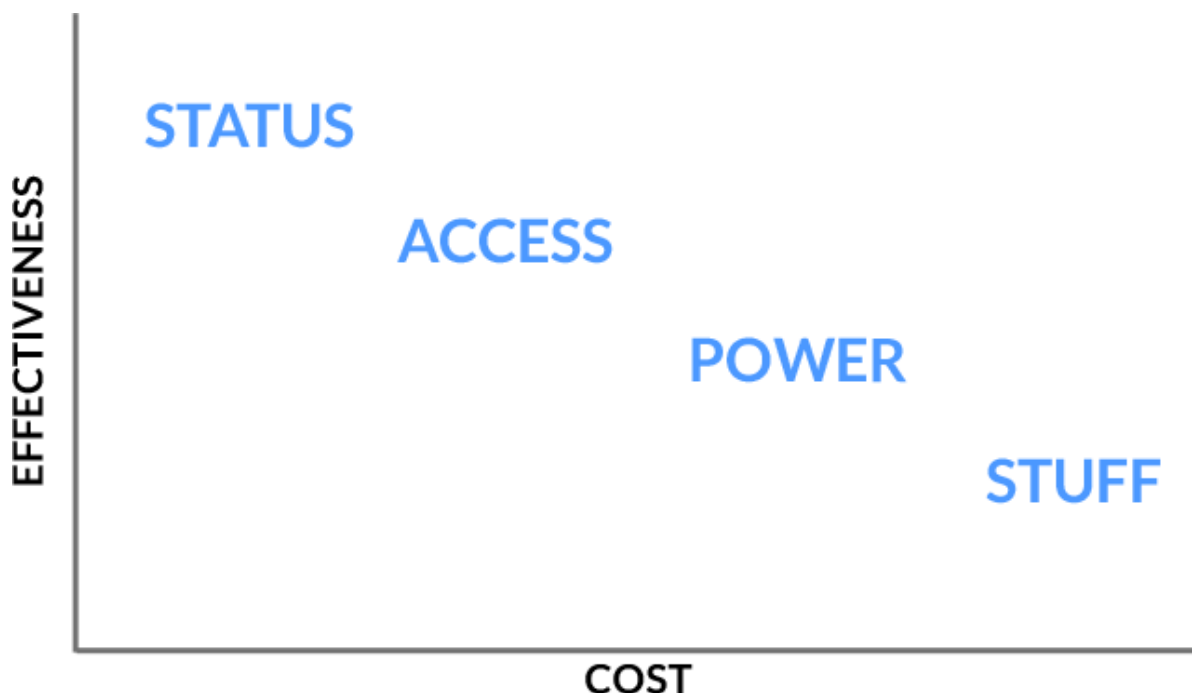
Power suggestions:

- + Create committees based on company values
- + CEO for a day
- + Special decision making privileges based on employee recognition value data

Unconferences

Hire special guests to talk on a monthly, quarterly, yearly basis, depending on budget.

Ask recognition winners and other staff to speak on topics of expertise or passion.



4. Eliminate Bad Apple Behavior

Contrary to popular belief, your company is only as strong as your weakest link. Managers and directors must identify those weakest links and correct the behavior. Letting an employee go is never good for team morale unless everyone agrees someone should go. This is unlikely to happen except in very small teams. The best is to try to correct the behavior.

If left alone, bad apples will decrease productivity by 40%.¹ Researcher Will Felps who lead the study adds, "... how low the lowest teammate is on the variables of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability is usually a strong predictor of group-level variables."²

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- 1 <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/370/ruining-it-for-the-rest-of-us>
 - 2 http://openwetware.org/images/a/a5/Final_BA_ROB.pdf

How to Solve

Sit down with this employee and discover why this behavior is persisting. Ask what has happened to lead to this employee to feel or act this way. Laziness and pessimism may be caused by a larger problem or specific event in the company. If HR or manager doesn't assume the problem is due to the personality difference, then the conversation can be nurturing and the problem resolved much more easily. If an employee is chronically criticizing the company after a sit down conversation, then that employee should be let go that day. However, Will Felps is investigating an interesting finding from his research that if staff asks everyone questions and engages the group, the bad apple effects are reduced.¹

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- 1 <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/370/ruining-it-for-the-rest-of-us>

Summary

Through following the steps outlined in this document, and suggested links, company culture will be dedicated to a cause focused on company values. By using recognition and the strategy outlined above, your staff will feel more connected. Barriers between departments are broken down. Staff will feel a more one-for-all mentality guided by company values.

Dan Pink made the idea that money will not lead to better performance famous in his TED talk.¹ He showed that knowledge workers are more motivated when given an environment of autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Thus, if your company adopts a strategy around recognition that supports skill gathering, an office policy of autonomy, and experiences to engage, your company will reap the rewards of a strong culture.

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- 1 http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation

Bad apples

- Laziness
 - Pessimistic depressives
 - Jerks
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Connect Then Lead

<https://hbr.org/2013/07/connect-then-lead>
